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## Dealing with Physical Isolation

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has altered all our lives in significant ways. For those who may have been exposed to the virus and are not having symptoms, quarantining oneself is a public health imperative. Most people, however, are unaccustomed to staying home and being away from family, friends, and co-workers. If you feel lost as to how to occupy yourself during such times of solitude, here are some suggestions to consider:

**Stay Connected.** Physical isolation does not mean social isolation. Whether you are a quiet and shy person or the life of the party, everyone needs connection. Use your phone, email, letter writing, and/or Facetime to stay in contact with people. Especially if you live alone, be sure to connect with at least two people every day by phone or by video.

**Create Routine.** Routines are central to daily life and help contain anxiety. Write a schedule and/or a to-do list each day of tasks/activities. Include meaningful things that you'll be happy to have done. Also, a few daily, consistent activities will be helpful. For example, have tea/coffee at the same time each day if that's a comfort. Call the same friend/relative at the same time every day. Shower and change clothing daily to feel refreshed, just like you use to do before going to work. Keep up with basic selfcare. Hydrate with water and eat a well-balanced diet.

**Practice Sleep Hygiene.** Rise and go to sleep at the same time each day. Maintaining your wake/sleep rhythm is essential for great sleep. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night. This will help mood, anxiety, and overall health.

**Get Moving!** Seek to incorporate movement into every day. Gentle stretching, gentle yoga, qigong, and cardio videos to name a few can be found on a smart TV, apps, and various websites. Consider dancing with a friend via Facetime or with multiple people with the app House Party. Consider a virtual excise challenge with friends.

**Implement a Media Diet.** Reflect upon how much news you absorb via the TV, radio, or internet and ask yourself, "is this helping me or harming me?" If you're not sure, lessen the amount. Try one half-day without news and check-in with yourself: do you feel any lighter, any better?

**Clean and Declutter.** Cleaning and organizing brings a sense of control and accomplishment in such uncertain times. Select one drawer or one closet at a time. The garage is typically a place begging for decluttering. For those who love to clean, tackle the refrigerator and freezer.

**Practice Mindfulness.** Try apps such as Insight Timer, Calm, and Headspace for a daily meditation to start and/or finish your day. Also end each day by writing or saying aloud 5 things for which you are grateful. Be specific.

**Read or Listen.** If you find that your concentration is challenged, consider a book of short stories. Ask a friend or relative to loan you their Kindle e-reader if that's helpful. If you are not a reader, podcasts are plentiful with something for everyone and most are free.

**Give Yourself a Manicure or Pedicure.** Start with a warm foot soak for comfort. You may have been standing on your feet for years in your profession. It's time to pamper them.

**Handwrite a Letter.** This physical and mental activity will also get you away from all screens and the recipient will enjoy receiving a paper letter. If you have a flair for writing, begin a poem or a short story – online you'll find short story starters.

**Rediscover Your Creative Side.** Begin with non-judgment. Get crayons or colored pencils and blank paper or download coloring books made for adults. Drawing and coloring are two of the first mindful activities we did as children and they still hold joy. You can also sketch, paint, knit, crochet, color, scrapbook - - YouTube is full of online instructional videos for these activities.

**Express Yourself.** Face Timing with family and friends is one of the most important things you can do during this time. Talk about how you are feeling and allow yourself to cry. You have the right to have all your feelings and expressing them releases tension. And allow yourself to laugh! If you need or want more input, find a comedian who makes you laugh. Use laughter to set your day in a great direction.

If you are quarantined or voluntarily physically isolating, please know that you are positively impacting your local community, state, country, and likely beyond. These thoughtful and responsible decisions are appreciated by so many. Please keep in mind that BHC counselors are experienced and available. They offer counseling with licensed mental health professionals via telephone or video-based platforms. The EAP is available 24/7 at 800-864-2742 or 203 407-1029.

Behavioral Health Consultants, LLC  
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